



NOW THEN.

NATHAN GIBSON. GANGS. CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA.
A MAGAZINE FOR SHEFFIELD. ISSUE 34. FREE.

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NOW THEN IS A FREE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE IN SHEFFIELD.

We aim to cultivate choice, voice and responsibility by providing a platform for independent art, trade, music, writing and local news. We support Sheffield's economy by only working with independent traders, community groups, charities and local government.

Almost all articles published in this magazine are written by members of the community, not professionals. If you don't like what you read or have something that needs to be said, get in touch. Your opinions make Now Then what it is.

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Now Then is produced by not-for-profit social enterprise Opus Independents.

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Enjoy the read.

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EDITORIAL.

Hello one and all and welcome to the new Now Then site. We're really happy with the way it has turned out and an extra special thanks goes out to Michael Auty at Madewithpixels for getting it online. We will be tweaking it in the coming months, as well as trying to get all our back issues uploaded, so give us a shout if you have any feedback or ideas for improvement.

Now Then #34 is an online-only issue. Many mags take a break in January because business is slow, but we're not ones to sit about twiddling our thumbs. This month, I recommend you read Will Milner's article about Sheffield gangs and Nigel Mphisa's exclusive interview with Cinematic Orchestra.

Happy New Year. You've had your fun - now get your nose back to the grindstone.

SAM.

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LOCALCHECK.

CREDIT UNIONS AND CHRISTMAS DEBT.

HOSTED BY ALT-SHEFF.

This article will change your life. You will be better off if you read it. Struggling through a tidal wave of Christmas debts? Smile! Can't manage on your benefits/wages/student loan? Panic not! How can a magazine article sort your money? No-one's going to pop a crock of gold into your garden, but if you agree that 'crock of crap' better describes most financial services, read on.

The answer, for an easy life, is credit unions. They've been quietly steaming on with what they do best for about 160 years, slowly growing, unlike boom-and-bust banks.

A credit union is a transparent organisation for members to save money, but that's not half the story. By squirreling a bit aside, each member builds up a small part of the huge asset of lending power. Credit unions also lend to members, mostly at a flat rate of 1% per month (12% APR). But loans are a bad thing, right? Well yes, if you lived in a time of plenty, with a rich Daddy. Meanwhile, back in the real world, anything from a bus pass to a holiday, if you 'put it on plastic', sign a hire purchase agreement, 'take advantage of easy credit terms' or simply have a bank overdraft, it's all the same thing. The only difference is the interest rate you pay. Oh, and the nastiness of the small print. Through thick and thin, credit unions charge the same. Interest rates don't rise and fall, because they don't speculate on the markets, unlike your greedy bank.

All they do, and do well, is offer savings and loan services at budget cost to ordinary people like us. It's the original ethical investment. It's all local and they keep money in the community, because there are no parasitic outside shareholders to pay.

Sheffield Credit Union is admittedly hard to find, tucked away in part of the market that I bet you've never seen. The opening hours are just 10am-1pm, but you'll be surprised at the friendly welcome. No stress, no sales pitch, no call centres! They definitely don't encourage members to take out loans they can't afford. To join you'll need to take some ID, so phone and check before setting off. There's also a series of local outlets called collection points, so there may be one near you.

Did I mention I am a credit union member and have been for about 15 years? That's how I can manage on a low income, sleep at night and still afford holidays by spreading out the cost. I don't worry about the unexpected because I know they're on my side. I'm nearly always paying off a loan, but all the while also slowly building up the other side of my balance sheet - my savings.

You can be both 'in the red' in borrowings, whilst 'in the black' in savings. If you know how businesses work you'll understand that it's not a question of either/or. It takes some time to understand, so it's worth talking over with the credit union staff. They'll be happy to explain, and one thing's for sure - it works.

The strength of credit unions' is in the hundreds of individual members like me, not in some over-inflated stock market myth. No credit union has ever needed a bailout, but they are supervised by the Financial Services Authority, which regulates banks and provides a £50,000 Financial Services Compensation Scheme. Another thing - they provide a sort of life insurance for free. This is done through an insurance policy which pays out on the death of a member an amount on top of whatever savings they had at the time. It writes off any debt, so when you're dead you've got no worries.

Management of credit unions is drawn from long-term members who get interested, take on the responsibility and stand for election annually at meetings which members can attend to hear all about the year's progress.

I've met loads of people over the years who agreed with me that credit unions are a wonderful idea; educated, nice people who recommend credit union membership for everyone else, but didn't join themselves. Why not? Couldn't be bothered? Too awkward? Not at all - almost everything can be done by phone and bank transfers. I don't believe there's anyone who wouldn't benefit from a credit union account. On the borrowing side, the loans are easy to arrange. I've called in right before going abroad, completely disorganised, and had my finances sorted in minutes. On the savings side, they usually pay a dividend every year. OK, it doesn't compete with the rate you get if you've got a fortune to risk on the stock market, but who's got that?

They can help people at all levels from those drowning among greedy loan-sharks offering rip-off rates, as well as people who have a regular salary or are self-employed.

You join a credit union for life, in the sense that it's a friend for life. Over the years you'll see your savings and the amount you can borrow grow. Remember where you heard it first. Change your life for the better - and your money back! Don't believe it? 172 million credit union members around the world do...

Sheffield Credit Union

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COUNCIL AXE.

CONSUMPTION.

How are the New Year resolutions doing? Dribbled with the fat of nut roast pig, scorched with candle smoke and cheap wine, muddled by late nights and morning chocolate? Come January, little pleasures may seem better than keeping resolutions that have lost their rose-tinted glow.

When researchers plugged wires into the heads of rats, straight into the pleasure centres of the brain, the rats pressed their little zing buttons seven hundred times an hour. Zing Zing! Humans can't get wires plugged into their pleasure centres quite yet, so we make do with other things. We flaunt iPads, Ray-Bans, Xbox and Fireman Sam. Gorge ourselves with abandon. Drink till the world pops. Zing Zing!

Some consumption is good. Consensual consumption. Creative consumption. Feeding off each other's touch, feeding off tone and light and taste, feeding off laughter and talk, feeding off good times. But there's always a temptation to just press our buttons and go zing. The eating, smoking, drinking zing that wrecks ourselves.

And the planet wrecking kind of zing.

The Samtronic Widescream TV zing, with an extra "Drown Bangladesh" red button. As the world heads towards carbon meltdown, sit back and watch it on HD 3D. Consume stuff without making, consume images without moving, consume people without talking. Zing Zing!

That kind of zing won't leave us standing.

We are consumed also. Smile at work and say "have a nice day". Make yourself respectable or pretty. Forget being you, be nice to be consumed, hope you come again. Dress up for the opposite sex, for office politics, for TV talent scouts. Just follow your orders on how to move and think. The masses dominated by the rat kings and queens, and we all get to consume until we are sick. Zing Zing!

That kind of zing doesn't leave us living.

Back to your resolution, that promised restraint. You can be proud of trying, even if you fall down sometimes. It's a very human mistake to think that people shouldn't make mistakes, that humans are something other than clever apes, barely more than children, falling and bumping through life in a way that big-brained space aliens would switch channel just to watch and laugh at. There's no problem in trying to be a better person and getting there bit by bit. Where people go wrong is not trying at all.

Because each time a person consumes something they don't need, that's a little bit of the world gone. And there's not an endless supply of the world. There is no divine right backing up all those would-be rat kings and queens burning up the world. Zing Zing! The arbitrary luck that put them in one country rather than another, in one family rather than another, in one job rather than another. Having supermarkets and brochures to choose from, instead of having to repair old shoes and clothes. Each time someone chooses not to consume a bit of the world, they become a bit less like a rat king or queen, turning away from the red button towards something more human.

Back to your resolution - have you thought what you'd spend the extra money on? The money from the unbought chocolate or unsmoked cigarettes. You could give to other people who help people who can't consume enough to live. Or give to people who would like to change things for the better, so everyone has a more equal share of consuming at a rate that won't break the world. Maybe with some spare money going from that saved consumption, you could consume some pure goodness. How about that to ping your zing button? Zing Zing!

A hundred or so years ago there was a trade called a 'translator', a person who could take old broken shoes, break off soles and leather and eyelets, and remake a new pair out of all the bits. Instead of being consumers, it might make people happier to be translators - remaking stuff, retelling stories, recreating recipes, reimagining ourselves. Doers instead of dominators. Commoners instead of kings and queens.

Back to your resolution. Changing the world is all about changing yourself. How you consume stuff and other people, or don't. How you dominate or reject domination. But don't listen to me, because I'm just an over-educated ape, a child falling and bumping through life until it's all over. I hope you take these words and translate them into something for yourself, even if just to help you stick to one little resolution. Because you can be at least a bit of the person you want to be. And that can be a fine way of pressing your button. Zing Zing!

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SHEFFIELD WILDLIFE TRUST.

WITH GREEN FINGERS AND HEARTS.

BRENDAN MCFADDEN.

The year is 15,000 BC. The nomadic tribespeople of the Urn stand and admire their finished showpiece, a stone circle in Crookes. It has taken a month, but now all that hard handcraft has paid off. It stands etched in the landscape, giving Sheffield one of its first symbols of civilization. Utus, the head of his clan, has seen his dream realised. He has built his talisman, constructed to acknowledge and ward off the spirits of nature and provide a place of ceremony for his bloodline. His work is now complete, his family are now settled and they will continue to live and hunt in the land for generations to come.

This ancient Bronze Age tribe is long gone from our midst, but still ingrained in Sheffield is its serene natural landscape setting in the heart of The Peak District. It has seen industry and commerce take over, but still shines though as the greenest city in Europe. Nowadays, our lovely landscape is in part tended to by the careful hands of the people at Sheffield Wildlife Trust. As part of a network of 47 trusts, they have one core mission - to help local people and wildlife. They are the single largest conservation and environmental group operating in the region and have created 11 sites within the boundaries of the seven hills. They also run a trading arm known as Wildscapes, which provides a high quality landscape and ecology consultancy service. Various training opportunities are on offer, with a wide range of NVQs in conservation, wild food and geographical information systems.

They reassuringly have a strong backbone behind them and are more than well equipped, with support from the national Wildlife Trusts network and from Sheffield Council and Sheffield regeneration agencies on home turf.

In a society that has been condemned to an impending carbon death by scientists - not a day goes by that we don't hear damning news reports of melting ice caps and the increasing temperature of the Earth - nature and our ecology are slowly disappearing into a swamp of nothingness. While politicians argue what can be done on a national level, Sheffield Wildlife Trust makes a valuable contribution right here and now. Their 50 dedicated employees work all out and there are no less than 4,000 members, always leaving an open door for others to play a part.

For those of you who have a David Attenborough edge to their sword, there is more voluntary work than you can shake an oak branch at. The charity provides environmental training and food & health living development, offering an excellent range of opportunities on a casual or regular basis for people who are looking for work in the environmental sector or just want to lend a hand. From backroom media and marketing representatives to in-the-field outdoor volunteers helping on participation projects at the nature reserves, there is something for everyone.

Regular events held by Sheffield Wildlife Trust aim to involve the public in their work, with a particular importance placed on involving families in play activities, practical conservation days and watch groups.

With green fingers and hearts, you can help preserve this city, which has remained picturesque for thousands of years.

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GANGS.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE.

WILL MILNER.

The names Percy Sillitoe and George Mooney loom large in Sheffield folklore, although many people living here have never heard of these colourful characters or the turbulent period they inhabited. They are the subject of J.P. Bean's excellent local history The Sheffield Gang Wars. For those of you who have never had the chance to read Bean's book, it tells the story of the rise and fall of the Sheffield gangs, a tale of vice, villainy and violence on the mean streets of South Yorkshire. What follows is a criminally short synopsis of the tale, so if you are sitting comfortably then I'll begin.

Sheffield was a pretty grim place in the early 20th century. Stinking and soot blackened, Orwell described it as 'the ugliest town in the world'. Much of the population was crammed into unsanitary slums, where poverty, mass unemployment and endemic gambling had for decades fostered criminality and gang culture.

In the 19th century, there had been the Gutterpercha Gang (charmingly named after a chemical used to make rubber coshes) and later the Red and White Silk Gangs, named after the silk neckerchiefs they liked to sport. However, the 1920s became the most notorious period in Sheffield's criminal history, earning it the moniker 'Little Chicago' as rival factions battled to control the Sky Edge Tossing Ring.

Not the cottaging hotspot that its name suggests, a tossing ring was an area where men gathered, often in their hundreds, to bet illegally on the game of Pitch and Toss, an elaborate version of Heads or Tails.

The Skyring, as it was then known, was positioned on a patch of wasteland on a hilltop behind what are now Parkhill flats. Its position above the city gave lookouts ample opportunity to spot incoming police raids, and this relative degree of security drew the highest spending gamblers from across the city and beyond. Controlling the proceedings and turning a healthy profit in the process were George Mooney and the Mooney Gang.

During and directly after WWI, gambling in Sheffield had boomed, eating up the wages of miners and steel workers reliably employed by the war effort. But the post war slump in production, mass unemployment and a collapsing welfare system meant less money to be gambled. The gangs' profits dried up. Mooney, wanting to hold on to the lion's share of the ring's earnings, decided to 'let go' from the gang all but a handful of his closest accomplices. Understandably a bit miffed, his former employees did what any self respecting group of ex-henchmen would do, and started a gang war.

The battle between the Mooney Gang and the Park Brigade, as the new faction came to be known, went on almost uninterrupted from 1923 until 1925, with men being slashed with razors, beaten with pokers and stabbed with bayonets, bystanders and police officers wounded and houses being laid siege to and stormed. A combination of witness intimidation and surprisingly light sentencing for those few who were successfully prosecuted meant that the efforts of the police had little effect in deterring the belligerents. The feud finally culminated in 1925 with the violent murder of William Plommer, a man who seemed to be only incidentally related to Sheffield gangs.

It seems that Plommer's crime against the Park Brigade had been to force one of their members to face, in a fair fight, a man who he had previously assaulted without provocation. In the brawl that followed, the Brigade man was knocked to the ground and as Plommer helped him to his feet he warned him that he would be punished for what he had done.

The following day a pack of men from the Park Brigade turned up on Princess Street, where Plommer lived, and paraded up and down looking for him. Finally it seems he had gone out to meet them, unarmed, and challenged them to fight him one by one. Being an armed gang, they did not take him up on his offer but did the thing that armed gangs are made for, collectively beating him up with pokers, coshes and the most feared of all weapons - a piece of lead on a string.

He was clubbed to the floor, though not before knocking out one of his attackers, and then stabbed in the stomach. Plommer managed to drag himself as far as his house, where one of his attackers beat him across the head with a child's scooter. Plommer was taken to hospital, where he died from his wounds. The attackers went to the chip shop.

Upon being found there by the police, one of the attackers admitted "I hit him on the head" but, after being warned by the officer that the situation was serious, he executed a piece of brilliant legal counter attack, stating "I did not hit him on the head".

In the end, it was never quite established who had struck the lethal blow. The defendants argued that although it had been them who had been beating him up, it was 'someone else' in the crowd who must have actually stabbed him, which isn't really very convincing. The murder weapon was never discovered, even though a collection of other abandoned weapons were found scattered around the scene. Two of the men involved were hanged, while the others were sentenced to hard labour.

Around 8,000 people attended Plommer's funeral at Burngreave cemetery, showing not only commiseration for the victim, but condemnation of the violent gangs that seemed to act with impunity on the streets of Sheffield.

Reacting to public outcry and orders from the Home Office to crack down on gang violence, the Chief Constable formed the Special Duties Squad, a group of extra large, extra tough plainclothes police officers who spent the next three years copiously beating up everyone associated with the known criminal gangs, or at least being present while suspects repeatedly fell down stairs.

One of the most famous and controversial brawls took place in the very same Red House where so many of us have wobbled the night away. This went on until, so the story goes, they saw the error of their ways, gave up the thug's life and turned their noses to honest toil.

The man usually credited with forming the Special Duties Squad and bringing an end to the Sheffield gangs is Percy Sillitoe, a man who got his training in the brutal South African Police (where he secretly sired a son by a 13-year-old Zambian girl) and who would, after serving as Chief Constable of Sheffield, go on to break up the Glasgow razor gangs, advise J. Edgar Hoover on dealing with the Chicago gang problem and take a brief stint as sweet shop owner before finally becoming the head of MI5. In fact, the Squad had already been set up by Sillitoe's predecessor a year before he took office, and much of the work in breaking the gangs had already been done. Regardless, Sillitoe has entered folklore as Sheffield's gang buster, building on his predecessors work by having his squad trained in Ju Jitsu, introducing forensics and police call boxes to Sheffield and adding a man to the force whose fearsome reputation was demonstrated by his ability to hold seven tennis balls in one hand.

This capacity to transport tennis equipment seems to have proven too much for the Sheffield gangsters, and in 1928 the Special Squad was disbanded and the gangs broken. Their services were no longer required.

Buy Sheffield Gang Wars and learn more about its author at jpbean.co.uk.

STOP THE TRAFFIK.

SLAVERY: NOT JUST IN THE HISTORY BOOKS.

ANTONY LARSEN & JAMES HEYDON.

Slavery. A dirty word for a dirty practice which most would agree is a lesson learnt. So why are we still doing it? According to the United Nations, as many as 2.4 million people are being trafficked globally at any one time, with an estimated market value of \$32 billion (£20 billion). The industries many of these people are trafficked into include domestic servitude, agricultural or industrial labour and, perhaps most horrifically of all, sexual exploitation.

It may be convenient to imagine that such things only happen in developing countries, or nations that end in 'stan', but the sad fact is that this is happening right here in Sheffield. In December last year, two men and one woman, believed to have been part of a Slovakian trafficking ring, were convicted of enslaving and forcing a fifteen year old girl to work in prostitution. Forced to have sex with up to forty men daily, the UK Border Agency believed she made the gang between £200 and £300 a day. Many women liberated from forced prostitution have suffered the same fate. Victims also have to endure physical violence, starvation, psychological torture and imprisonment.

Non-governmental organisations, the police and the UK Human Trafficking Centre (previously based in Sheffield) believe that cases such as this girl's are not unique. Sheffield itself contains around forty brothels and, while this in itself does not prove the presence of forced prostitution, research suggests that the likelihood is high.

Please don't think that this is an attack on prostitution. Some organisations have been known to confuse prostitution and trafficking, using the arguments against trafficking as a vehicle for their own agenda. It is important for us to realise that trafficking for sexual slavery works within the darker parts of the sex industry, which has on the whole rightfully condemned trafficking.

In Sheffield, a growing problem is internal trafficking. This involves young, usually vulnerable girls who are seduced by older men using gifts, alcohol and charm. Once a young girl is smitten, often believing she is in love, the traffickers make their move. They take her from location to location, using a number of tactics to force her to sleep with strangers. These range from psychological coercion through to outright physical violence. Some organisations believe that as many as 400 cases of grooming for such purposes could have taken place in the Yorkshire area alone within the last five years. Indeed, late last year a local mother told of her daughter's horrific ordeal whereby she was preyed upon from the age of 11, being moved around flats and hotels in Sheffield by a gang of young men for a total of three years.

While this may seem bleak, a number of organisations are making inroads into combating the issue. In 2007, the UK Human Trafficking Centre was established in Sheffield. This was a specialist unit dedicated to researching and preventing human trafficking, but some fear that its recent integration into the Serious Organised Crime Agency, which is being scrapped under the new coalition government, means its future is uncertain.

Several charities specialise in raising awareness and creating a society intolerant of trafficking. One of these is the international coalition Stop the Traffik, an organisation with both a global and community-based approach to tackling trafficking. Formed in 2006 by presenting the United Nations with over 1.5 million signed declarations against human trafficking, it has now grown to incorporate over a thousand NGOs around the globe. Despite having such an international reach, its approach to empowering local communities has seen the introduction of three Stop the Traffik ACT (Active Communities Against Trafficking) groups in Sheffield - one at each university and a newly formed local group for non-students.

The student groups have had a number of successful campaigns, including raising awareness amongst Sheffield's student population, and all three groups have big plans for the future. These include education advocacy, raising awareness among local businesses and educating Sheffield's frontline service providers, such as taxi drivers and teachers, to help them recognise the signs of trafficking and act upon them. These groups are always happy to welcome new members and hear new ideas.

stopthetraffik.org



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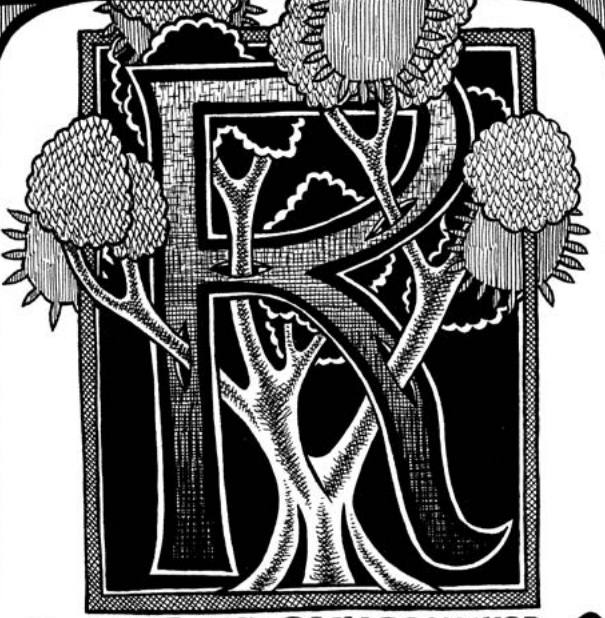
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It's a bit quiet on the events front this month, but there will be a lot going on in February. Also look out for Sheffield's first ever Poetry Festival, which will take place in the first week of April. In the meantime, keep your poems and short stories coming to joe@nowthenmagazine.com,

Joe.

YOUNG WRITERS' HUB.

nawe.co.uk

The Young Writers' Hub is a new online network for young writers. It provides information about events, publications and opportunities for young writers to take part in other literature development projects running across the region.

LAUNCH OF YOUNG WRITERS ANTHOLOGY 'BORN LISTENING'

Literature organisation Signposts is very pleased to announce the launch of its young writers anthology, Born Listening. The book features over 60 emerging authors and poets from across Yorkshire. An exciting mix of new writing, both poetry and prose, it contains some of the region's biggest talents.

"Please read this book. It's full of beautiful, powerful, heartfelt and original writing which makes me feel that the future of writing, in these terribly uncertain times, is in safe hands. Keep the book and in 20 years look at the famous names that you read here first." – Ian McMillan

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POETRY REVIEW: MATTER '10.

Matter is an annual anthology publishing the best poetry, prose, children's fiction and script from MA Writing students at Sheffield Hallam University. This year's publication marks its 10th anniversary, a fine publication featuring some exciting new writers, alongside big names and guest contributors like Daljit Nagra, Margaret Drabble and Iain Sinclair.

It claims to be a rather 'sexy' publication, and being extremely well designed and visually pleasing, I'm partial to agree. Most pieces are accompanied by a photograph or an image which is an interesting exploration of both form and content and gives the book a sleek, professional feel. The writing is top notch as well, with poems from the likes of MA students Angelina Ayers and Fay Musselwhite sitting easily among the more established poets in the collection. I was particularly enamoured with the short prose of Dean Lilleyman, whose striking and visceral writing was amusing and shocking in equal measures. His short story, YES, opens with 'Billy is having the best night of his life. Everyone will love him, and his girlfriend Anna will change her mind and let him finger her for sure'. The strength in Matter lies in its variety of tone, style and content, while maintaining high quality and encouraging new voices. From Dean Lilleyman's acerbic prose, to Noel Williams piece 'How to Kill Francesca. Twice', an entertaining fantasy piece aimed at children.

This is an excellent publication, and although it serves to encourage new writers from the excellent MA programme at Hallam, it also stands alone and is full of literary gems from writers on the course and elsewhere that will both entertain and disturb. At £4.99, it's a steal and is available at Blackwells, Foyles and Waterstones.

JOE KRISS.

NEW YEAR.

The moor hen wails from a central eddy
of a lake
a dark sky and a dark car on the road
flare together
statues of horses, tall streetlamps
and the slant shadows
of fences
fall gradually to the ground
outside a slow
dumbfound town

Again the hail rises out
high across the marsh
and fate cards
stack wide and blank
at the side of paths
so hollow in the throat
the owl flies
to a dark loch
between two people

under these smoking trees
their faces are sweet and blunt

CLAIRE CARTER.

BABEL 4.

bbl

this moment of waking
far-off consonants
out of swooned dreams
to find fitting vowels

with language it is hard enough
but imagine the imagination
a glass of water simply
no complaints but without the glass

this is not my cat but the landlady's
a bean on a canvas just perfect
curled up like a cat
on my duvet to confound

have a bath without the tub
and landladies' language drowns
the carpet that saturates
I dry up with a vowel

AGNES LEHOCZKY.

Poem taken from Agnes' first book in English, Budapest to Babel. Available to order from eggboxpublishing.com.



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NATHAN GIBSON.

CAPTURING THE SHEFFIELD WINTER.

INTERVIEW BY JONES.

Nathan has been our in-house photographer for the last couple of years, and his work has graced a multitude of posters in the name of the cause, so it seems to make sense to have him decorating our first proper web edition.

He arrived a few weeks ago from Glasgow, clutching a Victorian cello and all his darkroom equipment. What you see in this issue is the result of him snapping, then developing and printing, on a beautiful 30s compact enlarger in an alarmingly cold stairwell tucked away in my studio.

What I really like about Nathan's images is how he works to capture moments. Hours spent walking the town, then sitting and waiting for the perfect subject. His healthy disregard for proper practice - allowing the films and the procedure of printing to build up its own grime without needless interaction - is something that would usually make me pull my hair out, but in this case I can't help but attach to his images.. Every time I look at his work I will see new directions and experiments in what he's doing, and it makes me very happy.

A lot of swearing (veering between Russian and English with gleeful abandon) made this happen. After some flawlessly produced photography last month, now is the time for some heartfelt dirt.

WHAT STARTED YOU TAKING PHOTOS?

I only really started taking photos properly a few years ago. More than anything else, this is a way for me to collect my impressions of what's going on around me and mark my territory. In my head at least. Since being a kid I've always wandered around the streets, fields and places I probably shouldn't be in search of greener pastures and I'm often happiest when on my own and on my feet. Every time I go somewhere new, I'll spend at least a few hours looking around and building a mental picture of the place. Having a camera with me gives me an excuse to take this further, provides a physical and mental barrier that allows me to take a step back from reality and a way of documenting the moments and patterns in my surroundings that strike me. I'm not much of a writer and I suppose in a way I'm exploring another method of putting together a diary with my pictures.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF STARTING A NEW PIECE?

Go outside. Start walking.

As I said above, most of my photos are taken from my immediate environment. I'm generally more interested in reactions (of mine and of others) to what's going on, rather than attempting to create a particular situation intentionally. That said, I'm becoming more aware of things like portraiture, so my approach may change considerably in the near future. I take a lot of pictures of my friends, the floor, through the windows of public transport. Keep eyes and ears and access to media open for potential situations. I feel that I'm only just beginning.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

Strong coffee.

TOOLS - WHAT DO YOU USE REGULARLY AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE?

I'm not too fussy. I've got a host of film cameras and a couple of DSLRs in various states of disrepair. Unless I have a particular aesthetic in mind beforehand, then if something takes pictures I'll pick it up and have a go.

My approach to gear is pretty reflective of my personality - frustratingly blasé about some things and overly anal about others. I really enjoy making use of my hands and this project has given me the chance to spend some serious time in the darkroom, getting my mits dirty doing a bit of painting. I look at film and digital as being completely different mediums and mixing the two can give some pretty exciting results. I love really pushing my raw files and am starting to realise what an amazing tool Photoshop can potentially be. At the same time, it takes a special kind of obsessive compulsive to want to sit on their own in the dark for hours on end, playing with chemicals and counting mississippis.

WHAT OTHER ARTISTIC MEDIA HAVE HAD AN EFFECT ON YOUR WORK?

To give a rather predictable answer, I'd say that books were my first love and music my second. I love newspapers in that they often read like a soap opera.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS?

Coffee. Fags. Walking. Library. Gigs. Photoshop. Plotting world domination. Being early. Polishing my shoes. Ranting about Steve Reich. Wondering where the next meal is coming from. Bike. Bus. Train. Fags. Meeting people. Coffee. Photoshop - resulting in being late. Thinking about going to China. Singing along too loud. Dark room. Park. Guinness. House gigs. Library. Staring out the window listening to the traffic. Air guitar. Marmite on toast. Talking about the band we'll never start. Afrobeat and Norwegian Black Metal. Making notes. Cooking curry. Trying to stay warm. Reading in bed. Walking. Coffee. Library. Photoshop. Coffee.

OUT OF YOUR MOST RECENT WORK, WHICH PIECE HAVE YOU ENJOYED MAKING THE MOST?

Reprinting the shot with all the reflections and the faceless man in the middle. I took it around a year ago, the last time I did a series for the magazine, and it's been obsessing me ever since. Simple composition but a lot of information and, just like all my favourite shots, a mix of intention and happy accident.

HOW HAS ART IN GENERAL CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED?

I get the impression that the concept of ownership is in a state of flux for numerous reasons.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

This issue of Now Then. I've spent the last few days either out on the street or locked up in the dark at the bottom of the stairs making prints, texturing and painting paper for colour and backgrounds, turning the bass up and wrestling the cat. I've been talking quite a lot with [designer] Matt Jones about the project and his input has been much appreciated, even if I didn't say so at the time. It's been fun and I always pick up a lot from the place where I'm currently situated. Due to having a few very good friends in Sheffield, I've been passing through every now and then for the last few years. Sheffield is a special place (puke).

ANY TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE MAKING MONEY FROM YOUR WORK?

Not really. I'm not a working professional at the moment. I do this because I love it; if I can find a way to make a living with it and be pleased with the work I'm producing, I'll be a very happy boy.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE IN ART?

Sentimentalism.

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE IN ART?

Humour. Honesty.

GOOD ADVICE YOU WISH YOU'D BEEN TOLD EARLIER?

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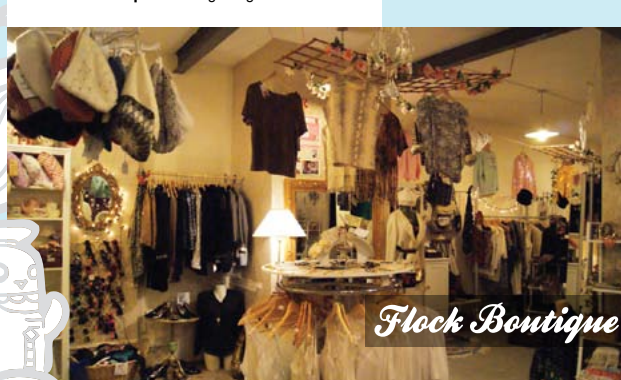
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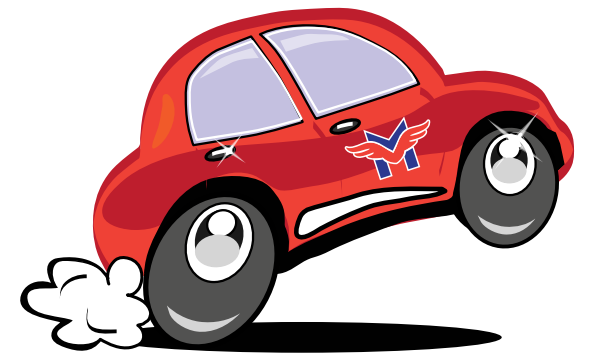
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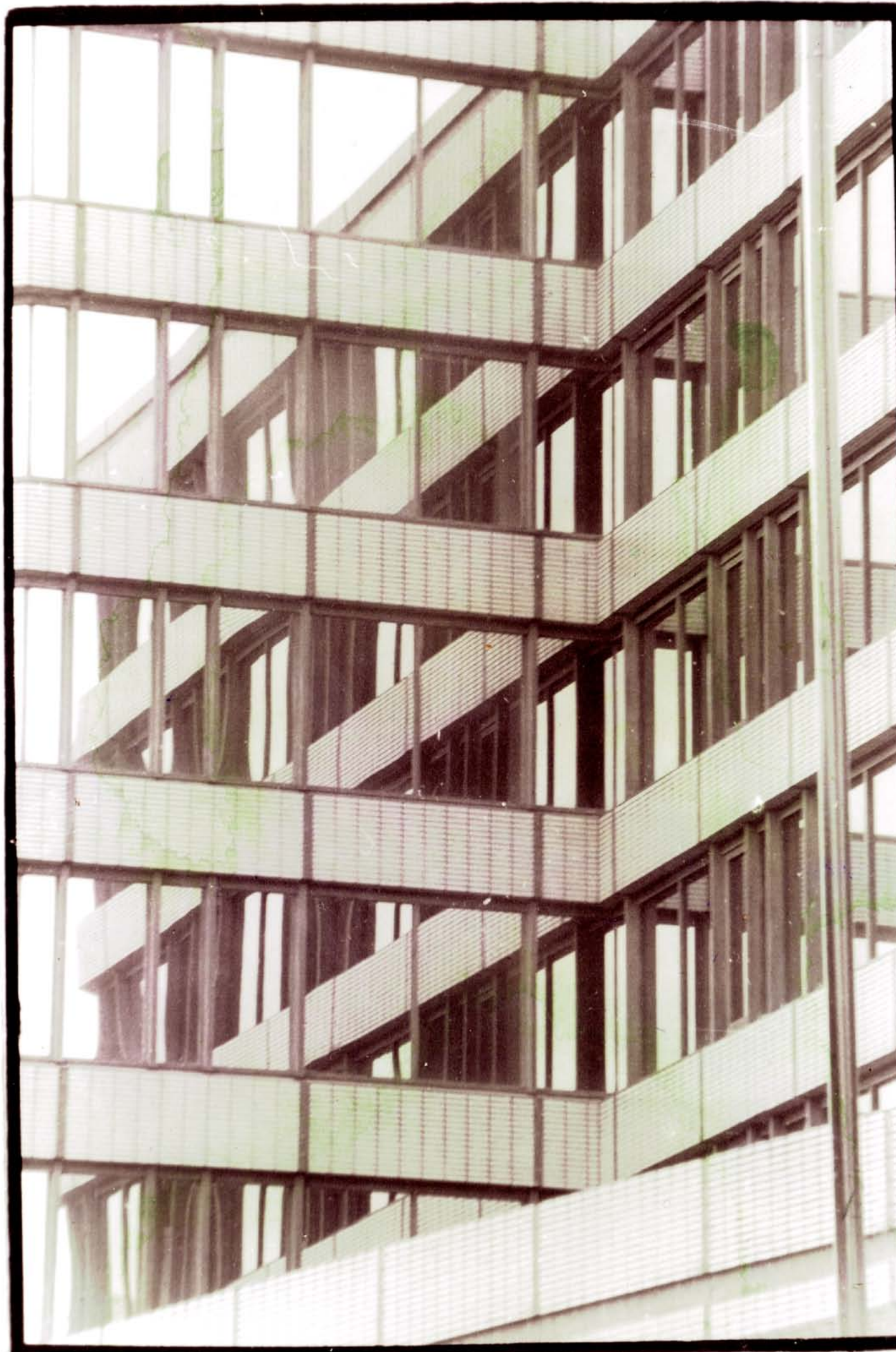
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SOUND.

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE.

IMOGEN DECORDOVA.

Last month, Site Gallery played host to Unsound Systems, an installation exploring the various ways that sound has been utilised as a weapon. Created by Hyperdub founder Steve Goodman (a.k.a. Kode 9) and research partner Toby Heys, the project's aim was to expose how sound has been used as a form of disturbance, deterrence and destruction for the best part of the last century, creating a climate of fear.

The installation included an audio documentary with sound clips from an array of musicians and theorists including Genesis P.Orridge (Throbbing Gristle), Hank Shocklee (Public Enemy) and writer Kodwo Eshun. Both Heys and Goodman visited the gallery to discuss the project in more depth, accompanied by clips of documentaries on a number of related topics.

One such clip was taken from the documentary **Wandering Souls**, named after a tactical endeavour by the US army in Vietnam which saw them amplify ghostly recordings of 'fallen comrades' into rural areas occupied by oppositional forces. The hope was to exploit the Buddhist superstitions of Vietcong troops, hidden in the jungle at night, to convince them to surrender. At best the operation served as an effective form of sleep deprivation and was perhaps not quite the convincing haunting that was intended.

Another clip introduced an amplification device which can channel direct audio in a way never seen before, concentrating sound waves in a particular direction. Outside the range of the waves the sound transmitted is inaudible, but within them it is deafening. However sinister, the commercial possibilities for such a device are exciting. Headphones could soon be a thing of the past.

Much of the focus of Unsound Systems was on extremes, being pushed to sensory boundaries that would otherwise never be reached. This is referred to as the field of unsound - frequencies below 20Hz and above 20,000Hz, the range of human hearing. During the duo's exhibition in Berlin, visitors encountered frequencies so low that they induced sickness. Unfortunately, there was no mention of the notorious brown note, whose reputation precedes it. The note's infrasonic power massages the listeners' bowels to such a degree that... well, you can imagine the rest.

The explicit transmission of sound can intimidate and is easily identifiable as a threat, but new breakthroughs in technology mean that often these are unidentified and can lead to disruptive psychological effects. Along with its destructive potential, sound has the ability to hypnotise and ritualistically control its subjects. In particular, heavy metal has fallen prey to various accusations of subliminally inciting violent activity. Judas Priest were famously accused of including a subliminal message condoning suicide in 'Better By You, Better Than Me', which supposedly caused two intoxicated teens to shoot themselves.

From supermarket and elevator muzak to playing Barry White to create a sexy atmosphere, we have to recognise these simple ways in which sound is implemented to realise that militant use of noise and civilian practise is much the same thing.

The point of Unsound System is not to moralise or to spread paranoia, but to make us aware of how we are manipulated by sound, not just by music but by all sorts of indecipherable noise; the constant buzz of technology that we barely notice and never ceases, a subconscious hum which is almost impossible to acknowledge unless you possess a bat-like sense of acute hearing.

We are all fascinated by the concept of music being internalised within us. Why else would we acquire technology that directly plants it into our heads to drown out external noise? It produces a physical effect that crosses the line between technology and biology. This idea expounds the correlation between the evolution of mankind and technology.

Given the chance, most people would have an archive of music planted into their brain. The thought of leaving their MP3 player at home is unbearable, but perhaps we should listen to the background noise and appreciate the sounds that surround us, ones that are natural and that we know aren't being manipulated - or at least we're under the illusion that they aren't.

For a far more in-depth and fascinating read, it's worth picking up Steve Goodman's book, **Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear**.

LIVE.

DAMO SUZUKI. FROZAC.

TASTE OF EDEN. AM JAM.

DAMO SUZUKI.

9TH DECEMBER.
HARLEY.

REVIEWER – CLARE WHITTY.

The Harley rarely fails to deliver an eclectic range of musical events, making it one of the pillars of Sheffield’s nightlife. And tonight’s performer, experimental frontman Damo Suzuki, is certainly about as eclectic as you can get.

As we stepped into the gig with quiet, excited anticipation, we were met by the bustling atmosphere we have come to expect from this venue. The presence of Spiral Navigators and other musicians from Sheffield’s psychedelic scene showed the creative influence of Damo Suzuki, the energetic singer who was picked from busking on the streets to join the German rock band Can back in the early 70s.

His stint with Can only lasted from 1970 to 1973, but his time in the band is seen by many fans as being their greatest. Now he prefers live performance over recording. He has set up Damo Suzuki’s Network, a worldwide collective of musicians who come together without rehearsal to create improvisational music for the moment. When playing gigs, he utilises local musicians for both support and backing.

Tonight’s support should have come from The Big Eyes Family Players, but due to unforeseen circumstances they were missing their drummer and bass player. Unfortunately, this meant they couldn’t play as a support band. The remaining members did, however, provide backing for Damo Suzuki as he pounded out his amazing bluesy voice with powerful force.

The absence of drummer and bass player meant a strong beat was definitely missing throughout the set. Instead, the band used guitars, synthesizers, melodicas and various effects to create a platform for Damo. The entire set was one long song, with the backing changing occasionally. The sounds were spacey and floaty and this contrasted well with Suzuki’s energetic voice.

His vocal style is similar to that of Captain Beefheart (RIP) and he growled, spat and sang down the microphone with the same kind of spot-on blues drawl. As a live performer, he has an edge that is rare to find. He interacts well with the other performers, always maintaining a stage presence throughout. Undoubtedly a performer worth seeing, although hopefully next time he will have some drums to back him up.

FROZAC SHEF LIVE FUNDRAISER.

3RD DECEMBER.
PENELOPES.

REVIEWER – BARNEY HARRIS.

Despite quiet concerns about this event becoming more of a Snowzac than anything else, our lads decided that the show must go on whatever the weather, and aren’t we (and indeed Sheffield Live radio) lucky that they did?

FroZac’s informed and open-minded event programming means you’d be hard pushed to second guess who or what will pop up on the bill. But for December’s Sheffield Live fundraising party, a well attended and equally well liquored-up Penelope’s was treated to a selection of two bands and four DJs, not to mention a good old raffle and belly dance performance thrown in to boot.

I walked in on a well received live performance from the Sheffield-based Mother Folkers. Talented and youthful critters, they are fast earning a reputation for always delivering the folk-filled goods. Local crowds are undoubtedly feeding off their growing on-stage confidence. The lead lady holds a mighty tune whilst a skilful percussionist taps out beats on a number of interesting objects including an exotic-sounding cajón drum. Throwing in more traditional folksy sounds courtesy of the accordion, guitar and bass, the ensemble produced refreshing and innovative re-workings of groovy classics like Jurassic Five’s ‘Concrete Streets’.

This was followed by a truly rambunctious set from Newcastle’s Maybe Myrtle Tyrtle, who, after a strong string of tunes, quite literally blew the roof off with their grin-inducing, Dylan-esque rendition of Bon Jovi’s ‘Living On A Prayer’. These guys have played from the highlands of Scotland to the highlands of Spain, presumably propelled by their limitlessly energetic stage presence and superb catalogue of original and mashed-up blues rock numbers. A top band, complete with an outrageously moustached harmonica playing frontman and quintessential Geordie-looking drummer.

Sandwiched between the live music was an expertly choreographed and visually delectable demo by the ubiquitous Boomshanka Bellydancers but, judging by a few reactions, they may have befuddled rather than bedazzled some of the more excitable FroZac revellers.

Following all the live action, Dill Zogg and resident DJs Tom Goose and Triffic carved out the soulful swing and psychedelic-edged breaks to accommodate a rich mix of party goers. Accordingly, Penelope’s dance floor was put through the wash, proving that behind all the worldly, quality musicianship, FroZac always guarantees everyone a dirty great stomp to some pretty filthy tunes. More please!

The event raised a formidable £250 for Sheffield Live, a token of appreciation from the FroZac camp to a radio station that promotes good local and global music across Sheffield. Judging from their last event, this is something they seem to be pretty good at doing too.

A TASTE OF EDEN.

11TH DECEMBER.
YELLOW ARCH STUDIOS.

REVIEWER - JAMES LOCK.

‘Roll up! Roll up to Yellow Arch as you have never seen it before!’ read the Facebook invite. So we do, and so it was.

The place was covered head to toe in absurd and abstract shapes, with large wooden mushrooms outside and handmade papier-mâché fruits hung from ceilings in sofa’d up rooms. Lots of respect goes out to the dedicated few who decorated Yellow Arches’ conglomeration of differently sized spaces and repetitive red stone steps. The outside area seemed suitably haven-like, with a little seating available and canopies to prevent the rain running through rolling papers and hair alike.

The event, brought to us by Curious Oyster, was a taster of the annual Eden Festival in Scotland, which has won the hearts of many a Sheffield mad head and doer. Featuring a lengthy line-up of bands like Burleskimo, Mantra Rhythms and Jungle Lion, alongside DJs from Junglist Alliance, Sequoia and Nasty Finger to name but a few, it was always going to be a stormer. The live room pelted out ska, reggae and dub, while the two DJ rooms explored house, electro, dubstep, jungle, old school and way more. Significant chilling space was provided in the downstairs room.

I can’t confess to having watched each act or to have been in a state significantly sober enough to recall exactly when and where people played. Safe to say, though, this was not your usual ‘live gig’. Starting as it did at 10pm and finishing at 5am, it resembled more of a rave. I can say, however, that the event was sold out, that by about midnight some of the rooms were completely inaccessible due to the throng of bodies dancing within them - always a good sign in my experience - and that ultimately the atmosphere of enjoyment and mutual laughter prevailed to create an event that will long stick in my mind as being another Sheffield goodun.

Also worth a special mention is the loss of Olly Galvin from Sheffield to the Indian sub-continent. He will be back, or so we’re told. This man of many trades and enthusiasms was one of the key organisers of this night’s madness and has served Sheffield musical’s endeavours well for many years. Keep safe, O lanky Jesus.

AM JAM.

9TH DECEMBER.
WASHINGTON.

REVIEWER – LUCY HORWOOD.

Raising money and eyebrows for Human Rights Day, the Sheffield University Amnesty International student group hosted quite a shindig at the Washington pub. The intimate stage and spangly festive decorations offered the perfect venue for a low-key, relaxed jam for charity. A surprisingly dazzling bill of some of Sheffield’s finest local talent was brought together by event organisers Hannah Renton and Lucy Meyler.

Starting early in the evening, I was just in time to catch a glimpse of the debut of Water’s Enemy, a newly formed afrobeat band. Kickstarting the evening, the 8-piece ensemble of drums, bass, piano, trumpet, baritone sax, tenor sax and percussion are only just beginning to create their own material, but their vigorous instrumentals gave us a taste of their homegrown sound in the making, rooted in an eclectic blend of musical influences. The honest and vibrant approach captured a fusion of hip hop, soul and afrobeat, their energy fuelled by the funky rhythm section and complimented by punchy riffs from both horns and vocals. Their performance infused an exciting air for a new arrival on the Sheffield music community, and the gusto and flair that underlined this modest performance promised there will be more from these guys in the New Year.

The showcase of Water’s Enemy gave way to the truly captivating vocals of Sheffield singer-songwriter Chloe Jade Simmons, a fair-haired Northern gem whose whimsical vocals recalled the sultry tones of Laura Marling. Her laissez-faire performance was ideal for a sociable crowd as people continued to arrive.

By the time Mantra Rhythms took to the stage, the pub was packed. Their intense dub beats infused the pub with a deep and mellow vibe. Their rhythms and rhymes got the crowd moving in no time at all. These cats are becoming pretty well known around Sheffield, after various performances across the city. Their sound was intense but chilled-out, enhanced by the lingering vocals of Joe Kriss, who stepped down from the stage and grooved on down with the crowds.

Next in line, gypsy-folk group Wholesome Fish were tracked down and hauled over from Nottingham after their recent ‘alfresco set’ in the hills courtesy of the Sheffield Folk Train. Their mad explosion of boogie-blues, bluegrass and Celtic bangers was undeniably cheesy but, with a washboard, a banjo and a fiddler as the prime instruments, they seemed nearly as bonkers as Eastern European gypsy-ska band Bell Hagg Orchestra, who topped the night off with a knees-up of flying feather boas and immense, burlesque vocals big enough to knock your socks off.



BRIAN ENO.

SMALL CRAFT ON A MILK SEA.
WARP RECORDS.

REVIEWER – BEN DOREY.

When I heard that Brian Eno was preparing a release for Warp I frothed at the mouth like a rabid dog. Eno is the godfather of modern ambient music. He invented the term and defined the genre with a set of groundbreaking releases in the latter part of the Seventies. A union with Warp, stalwarts of everything electronic and brainy over the past 20 years, promised an opportunity for Eno to do exactly what he wanted, perhaps marking a return to the form of those heady years past. Unfortunately the album failed to live up to my hype, but it is nonetheless full of interest and well worth a listen.

Opener 'Emerald and Lime' sets things off softly, with arpeggios on a piano falling over one another in strange chord progressions, before an eerie harmonica line enters, drenched in the subtly affected post production Eno thrives on. It feels like gently discovering a new aspect of a familiar place, washing various musical colours together like a painting. This continues into the next track, 'Complex Heaven', another moody ambient piece. Here slowly swelling drones and atonal noises are punctuated with minimal guitar and piano melodies, again creating the sense of a musical painting, rather than a linear story. This is one of the strongest features in Eno's early ambient work and what initially set him apart as a unique producer. It is a shame, then, that it is a quality lacking from a significant number of the other tracks on the album.

As of the fifth track, the sounds of collaborators John Hopkins and Leo Abrahams become more obvious and this is to the record's detriment, if only for the amount of space they occupy within the music. That timeless, non-linear quality I mentioned in the first tracks makes way for manic guitar and drum clattering which sound like a mixture between Eno's early collaborations with Robert Fripp and David Bowie's early Nineties experimentation. It is not without merit but fails to come up to the bar Eno has set with previous work. This is soundtrack music, rather than ambient - unsurprising when you consider that some of these are rejects from work Eno did for Peter Jackson's **The Lovely Bones**. The issue is that Eno as an arranger has to take a back seat to virtuoso musicianship from his collaborators, and though all the tracks are saturated with his unmistakable studio signature, the music itself, though substantial, lacks substance.

In the latter half of the record, the music returns at points to the ambient eeriness that Eno specialises in. 'Slow Ice, Old Moon' is a chilling track of heaving textures. You can almost hear the creaking of a glacier amongst its affected pad sounds and strange harmonies. 'Lesser Heaven' is the counterpart to the earlier complex one, with softly singing electric bells stumbling together to form lush chords. 'Calcium Needles' perfectly encapsulates the haunting environs of an underground chamber of stalactites, with dripping synths over a background of low bass and humanoid winds. In these moments the record manages to at least match the subtle brilliance of Eno's previous ambient works. It is just a shame that his first Warp release is a disjointed record, one with two very different faces that don't look good alongside one another.



JOHN FAIRHURST.

BAND.
DEBT RECORDS.

REVIEWER – LAMBERTUS PRENT.

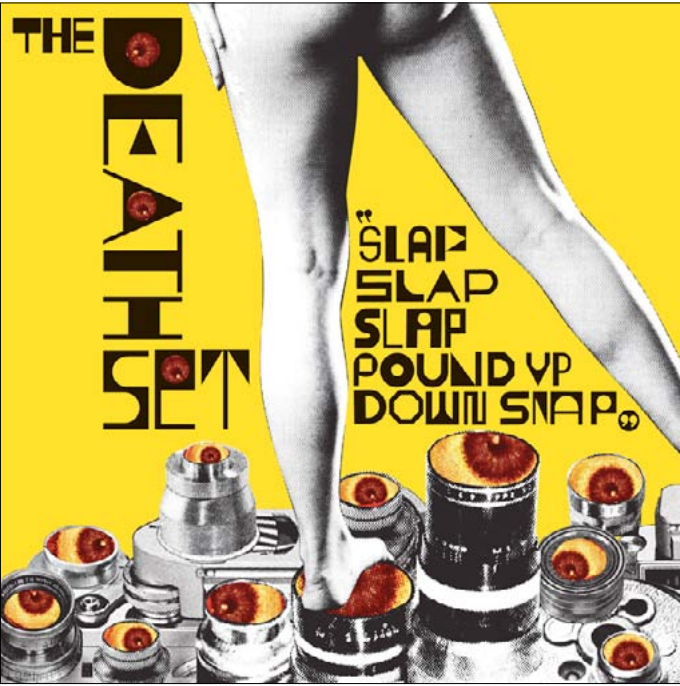
John Fairhurst first came to the attention of the world with the release of **Joys of Spring**, an intriguing blend of Eastern and Western music which more than amply showcased his deep understanding of both traditions admirably.

As should be evident from the title, **Band** is not a solo journey. After forming a backing band consisting of Ellis Davies, Alabaster de Plume, Dave Badlace and Rik Warren, John embarked on the unenviable task of attempting to better his instrumental debut, released on Manchester label Humble Soul in 2007. The result is a bit of a mixed bag, but one that is certainly heartfelt and accomplished.

Intro track 'Daylight' builds on the rawer elements of Joys of Spring, baring comparison to the after-hours drawl of 'Obnox Stomp', but perhaps with a little less stomp. A suitably mellow rendition of Mississippi John Hurt's 'Pay Day' follows, telling the story of a lover's feud and resulting separation with slow burning intensity. Sections that feature all five members singing in unison give this track more than a little gospel soul, with John's rasping, gravelly vocal tones taking the lead. This one has been a live favourite since its first performance, but it is pleasing to hear it done justice on tape.

'Lost My Mind' is another rowdy bar-room romp, with sliding blues guitar licks and an infectious refrain. This one drags a little due to a lack of chord changes or variation, but would definitely bring the house down in a live situation. Elsewhere, we have the high speed, nitro-injected blues of 'Big Dig', taking the recording into trashier, rockier territory, before we descend to the chirpy 'Earworm', which once again shows the virtuosity of Fairhurst's composition and guitar work. The track dies down halfway through, coming back with force with a sitar (or very sitar-like equivalent) tracing the melody ahead of a final repetition of the theme. The album closes with campfire balladry in the form of 'Goodbye', a solo acoustic track that sounds like a reworked Joys of Spring song.

If you take away the two interlude tracks ('Rant' and 'Wire Donkey'), that only leaves six tracks totalling 30 minutes, which in my opinion is more of a long EP than an album. This aside, my only criticisms of this recording stem from it being John's first vocal outing. He has been known to thrash it out at gigs, but until now he has kept quiet on record. He does a more-than-decent job of sounding like he smokes 40 a day (maybe he does), but my feeling is that there is still room for him to personalise his vocal delivery in much the same way as he has mastered the blues guitar form.



THE DEATH SET.

SLAP SLAP SLAP POUND UP DOWN SNAP.
COUNTER RECORDS.

REVIEWER – TOM BELSHAW.

Remember 'Agadoo'? Remember the inherent meaning encapsulated within its ethereal beauty and how it spoke of a time more conflicted, of a people more disheartened by the very essence of their culture? Of course you don't, because it was about harassing a pineapple.

Songs about nothing generally hold about as much gravity as a helium filled effigy of X Factor's Cher Lloyd. It would seem that pure enthusiasm and aggressive conviction dilute novelty rather well. Imagine Black Lace in torn off denim/leather ensembles, screaming of a 'hula melody' while spitting on an adoring Wolverhampton crowd, and the whole idea of fruit abuse becomes a little more subversive.

'Slap Slap Slap Pound Up Down Snap' by Brooklyn/Baltimore-based punk electronica outfit The Death Set is testament to that ethos. Couple that with outstanding beats from Spank Rock producer XXXChange, and a little ditty about an über cool Brooklyn handshake becomes a two-minute paradoxical tour de force.

Clattering drums, androgynous screaming and more top end than you could shake a rack of compressors at coalesce with XXXChange's penchant for squelchy basslines and vocal stuttering superbly. Everything advances with such a frantic sense of urgency that the abrupt closure at 1:57 seems so untimely it warrants an immediate re-listen.

The single provides two B-sides in the form of surprisingly uplifting, 'bliss punk' offering 'Been Too Long', and an aggressive re-working of the already well-received Diplo collaboration, 'Yo David Chase! You P.O.V Shot Me In The Head'. The latter steps away from Diplo's droning synth funk to make room for neo punk sounds to come windmilling through like Sid Vicious in a space helmet and hi tops. The departure from the twee, glittery, hardcore-flavoured pop of their first full length release **Worldwide** isn't overtly striking, but it lends enough depth to their sound to gain them a deservedly larger fan base.

Combine the fact the single clocks in at a frustratingly short six minutes with the knowledge that the next LP, **Michel Poiccard**, is set to be released way into the murky future of March 2011, and it's going to be a distinct struggle to keep The Death Set as current as they should be.

It is, however, going to be more of a struggle to get over having to listen to 'Agadoo' to write this. That's three minutes I'll never get back.



CHECAN.

NEW BREED EP.
TIPPING POINT.

REVIEWER – BEN DOREY.

Checan is an 18-year-old producer from Sheffield with a serious talent for making innovative, stylish garage. Though he has done a number of remixes for relatively big names before, this is his debut release of original material on Sheffield's Tipping Point Music and is already shaking things up, receiving multiple plays on Toddla T's Radio One show, amongst others.

Title track 'New Breed' starts with warm but affected synths and a sparse rhythm of claps and hats, slowly thinning out rather than swelling before the drop - a classy touch. Once the tune gets fully underway, DRS spits fairly standard UKG lyrics, but his flow complements the beats well and matches Checan's slightly nichey timbre, which comes through in increasing doses towards the tune's conclusion. The musical ideas could possibly be developed more, but the beats are tight and the young producer certainly knows his way around his synths.

But b-side 'Nervous' is where I fully realised the potential of Checan. A melodic and complex piece of future garage, it melds fluttering two-step rhythms with a delicious palette of melodic patterns and chord changes that wouldn't sound out of place on the **Richard D James** album. This is all carried along by a minimal but majestic sine wave bass line until the full beat drops, 4 and a half minutes in.

This is stunning music from a producer who could quite possibly be Sheffield's next big thing.

CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA.

UNDENIABLY BEAUTIFUL AND SMOKY.

INTERVIEW BY NIGEL MPHISA.

Wikipedia describes the Cinematic Orchestra as “a British electronic and jazz group”. Although factually correct, this description does the band a massive injustice and leaves a lot to be desired. Instead, think more organic and sensual than other members of the Ninja Tune roster. The Cinematic Orchestra deliver the missing soundtrack to a rainy French Film Noir; a film which may never be made, but the music is there, undeniably beautiful and smoky.

We talked to band leader Jason Swinscoe about the history and ethos of his seminal band.

I understand you have an interesting story about how you got signed by Ninja Tune...

I used to work for them, back in 1996. Previous to that, I'd met a guy who was doing work experience at Ninja Tune whilst DJing in a small club in Scotland, and after chatting to him I realised I needed to get a contact for the guy that runs Ninja Tune, which was Peter Quicke. When I finally moved down to London, I moved down with one suitcase and inside it was a Bang and Olufsen turntable, a Quad 303 amp and a few clothes around it, to kind of cushion it. That was it, and a bunch of records.

I got in touch with Ninja and got taken on, making cups of tea and generally helping out in the studio. I finally found a position doing distribution and marketing. I really wanted to get into the mechanics of how a record label works to allow me to understand it, and then to give me a chance to present my music at some point, which was a pure hobby at that time. I had no idea that they'd be interested in signing me, or how long I'd be working there, but I just knew I wanted to be in the music world.

How did you go about it, once you got to the stage where you thought your music was ready?

I'd be working there 11-7 everyday, Monday to Friday. I'd get home, make a strong pot of coffee and with the money I'd earned with signing on and saving up and so on, I bought an old performer 630 Mac and an Akai S1000, used Cubase as a sequencer and just started making music without any parameters. My record collection was a bunch of old film scores and jazz from the 60s and early 70s, and without any tuition I just tried to find ways of bringing the two things together. It was unconventional in its form as well as its arrangement. I was interested in the narratives of film music and how to bring jazz elements into that, to stay away from the pop formula of intro/verse/chorus.

So these pieces grew, and then I started just presenting them to Peter Quicke. Initially, he wasn't really listening or getting involved, so I'd work on another piece and present that and got other people in the office involved. At that time there were a lot of young music heads in the office, and that's how I met Dominick Smith, my manager, and various other people. Amon Tobin was signed to Nine Bar Records under the name Cujo. That was literally round the corner in London Bridge and I introduced him to Ninja Tune. It was a really strong centre and vibe there, so I just kept pestering Peter and other people in the office. After a while, we decided to start putting some of the music out, and I just kept pushing slowly.

Does Ninja Tune ever get involved in the creative process?

I am totally left to do whatever I want to do, which is a preferable situation for me. People often ask why I've never signed to a major, and there are two aspects to this. Firstly, the music is probably a bit too leftfield, as I get a bit experimental in places and in a way it's not structured enough for marketing purposes. The other reason is that there'd be much more involvement from a major with the A and R, the direction and marketing. On that side, you end up losing control a little bit, so for me it's much, much better to be with an independent label and have that freedom. They have been very supportive in that way. They just call up and say, "Have you got a new record or what?"

Is your working process still the same as it was back in those early days? Is it still sample based?

It's actually changed a lot since **Ma Fleur** in 2007. That record was a definite reduction process, returning to the basic song form - for example, on 'To Build A Home'. At that point, I was listening to a lot of new folk that was coming out, people like Joanna Newsom and Regina Spektor.

I wanted to move it away from the pop culture of **Everyday**, where I had Roots Manuva and Fontella Bass referencing the music of their roots - hip hop and R'n'B respectively - and so the band and rhythm bass was a very strong part of the music. On Ma Fleur, I took some of the drums away and went back to the basic song form. I'm actually working on a new record at the minute, which again is without any samples at all. I'm creating samples by recording live music and using more experimentation, so it will be more like a band. I've written all the material, but it needs to be performed by a band live, and built with all the musicians contributing, so that it becomes much more like a traditional kind of rock band but with a cinematic production and edge.

My working process is constantly evolving. I mean, [1999 debut] **Motion** was a homage to film scores and 60s jazz like John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Gil Evans etc . Everyday was bringing a band into sample-based music. Every album has been about introducing more elements and influences, being less rigid about where the music can go. Every album needs to be a whole new experience with a different set of problems and risks, and for me it's about the challenge. It has to be a challenge.

live

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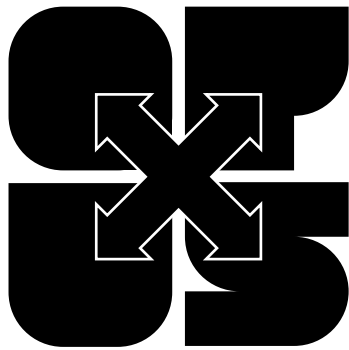
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The problem with Jesus as subject matter will always be the immediate lack of objectivity as any proposed dialogue takes shape. Those who choose to explore an alternative view of the myth can be as guilty of abiding too much to a concept as those who cling firmly to the established credo that substantiates their lives and keeps everyone under control. Sobriety is, in that sense, what most silver screen interpretations of 'our Lord' fail to attain. A good example of this can be found in a film that I confess (here and now and hoping to be forgiven for such sin) to have as a guilty pleasure - **Jesus Christ Superstar**, Norman Jewison's 1973 film version of the musical stage play, which is an exercise of pure mass hysteria.

My appreciation of that wild, anachronistic interpretation of the remaining weeks of Jesus' life on earth is centred on its unhinged, experimental visuals and the fact that I doubt it would get made quite the same way today. The still pervading (yet illogical) presentation of an Anglo-Saxon-looking Jesus would somehow tick the right box, but a big Hollywood studio would probably refrain from casting a black actor as Judas - just to cover their backs.

Convenient adjustments aside, controversy can either be intentionally courted or come as an inevitability. This is the case with Pier Paolo Pasolini's **Il vangelo secondo Matteo** (1964) and Martin Scorsese's **The Last Temptation of Christ** (1988), which, with different degrees of the aforementioned sobriety, present Jesus as a human being.

In my view, to bring that side to the foreground is to do even more justice to a man who, regardless of your belief system, seems to have definitely walked amongst us with (at the very least) great powers of persuasion. After all, if the ultimate message is to empower us to be better human beings, wouldn't the best example be set by a human Jesus, with all the doubts, fears, self-interest and temptations that come with it?

Not for those who choose to follow or preach from a church or another form of organised religion, simply because by equating Jesus with every one of us, they would be acknowledging an ambiguity that they're already denying they possess. It's easier to keep others under control if you claim to be speaking through the unmistakable words of a divine source.

The effect Jesus has had on the people who surrounded him and those who continue to feed into the myth - in what has to be the longest and strongest marketing campaign ever put together for an individual - can perhaps become the most interesting starting point for a cinematic depiction. Abel Ferrara's 2005 film **Mary** is not just a remarkable achievement in that sense, but it also feels achingly personal as a piece. The American director has let his inner struggle with Catholic beliefs inform the majority of his output, which in turn has gravitated towards such a raw authenticity that Hollywood felt obliged to blacklist him and Europe to embrace him. Mary can be seen as a culmination of both of these aspects.

The film stars Juliette Binoche as an actress who, after playing Mary Magdalene in a film-within-the-film, is so profoundly affected by the experience that she commits herself to a self-imposed exile in Jerusalem. This simple premise is dramatically encased by the various means through which the Word of God proliferates in modern society and highlights a revisionist reading of Mary Magdalene as a key disciple of Jesus, closer to the man than any of the Apostles.

By making use of real-life experts on early Christianity, Ferrara brings in the character of Ted Younger, a broadcaster doing a series of talk shows on the social and historical circumstances surrounding Jesus. As the disarray of Younger's personal life unfolds towards a potentially tragic outcome, he seeks Binoche's character as a long-distance spiritual anchor and the most moral aspect of the film is firmly cemented. It's interesting to see how a lot of this 'guilt' has been mirrored in previous films, particularly in **Dangerous Game** (1993), in which Harvey Keitel's film director character confesses his multiple infidelities to his wife, played by Ferrara's actual wife. It also turns Younger into a more definite alter ego of Ferrara than the expected director of the film-within-the-film, played by Matthew Modine.

The latter is evidently paralleling (if not parodying) the posture of Mel Gibson, whose unabashed Catholic faith informed the making of his 2004 film **The Passion of the Christ**.

I see it as worrying, to say the least, that a film like Gibson's - the indulgence in detailed violence and agonising suffering of which verges on the pornographic - is hailed and embraced by so many Christian groups, as if such extreme depiction serves to legitimise a faith among those who by will, conviction or spiritual freedom choose to live outside it. It also strikes me as ironic the way such groups regularly employ their influence to curtail the release of any other film that comes remotely close to such levels of violence.

Far from passing judgement on Gibson's conduct in his personal life, further irony can be found in what can only be described as a pervading hypocrisy on the part of those who impose and wave Jesus as a badge of moral superiority:

"I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." - Mahatma Ghandi.

JOÃO PAULO SIMÕES IS A PORTUGUESE FILMMAKER LIVING AND WORKING INDEPENDENTLY IN SHEFFIELD. HIS WORKS INCLUDE ANTLERS OF REASON AND AN ARRAY OF MUSIC VIDEOS AND DOCUMENTARIES.

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Michael Auty is a freelance graphic, web and multimedia designer working in and around Sheffield. We also think he's a bit of a legend. Michael creates, builds and hosts highly accessible websites (like this very one!) and can do everything from a total site build to consulting on your own project, all with a smile.

Michael brings a love of design to his work, which we've found immeasurably reassuring. He's managed to combine this with an ability to communicate what he means in a way that makes sense to all minds, frameworks and perspectives. An absolute gift.

Coupled with his love of design is a deep understanding of the technology. We're told he can bend such curiosities as W3C standards compliant XHTML, CSS and unobtrusive Javascript to his indomitable will. Michael works with both Telerik Sitefinity and WordPress delivery platforms, using both the .NET and PHP development frameworks. We're pretty sure there's a kitchen sink available too if you ask nicely.

As you may have guessed by the fact that we only set up @nowthenmag on Twitter a few months ago, we are not the biggest internet buffs around. There's just something about the smell of ink...But Michael has managed to steer us through these rocky, shallow waters with passion, creativity, expertise and humour. The benefits of having someone so supportive and accessible cannot be underestimated, particularly in a job requiring such skill.

Having previously worked with clients as diverse as The British Museum, Channel 4 and Sealine Yachts, you know you're getting the help you need. Let's face it, if he can drag us print whores into the 21st century he's not only a wizard, he's the Gandalf of the wizard community.

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Have you ever noticed how international problems are often reduced to statistics? They might help us put things in perspective, but they cannot give us the personal, human angle that is so vital to charity work.

Names Not Numbers hopes to challenge this blueprint by joining the dots and showing the bigger picture. Founded with this goal in mind, the Sheffield organisation currently supports an orphanage in India called the Raffa Home and a South African township community project, Tshwaranang. The charity places a particular emphasis on children and the family unit and does not take any admin or staffing fees. Good on them, we say.

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You might be familiar with the glories of outlets like Yabba and the Jam Rock Cafe (on Abbeydale and London roads respectively), but this one could've slipped under your radar.

Caribbean food is quite hard to get wrong – the approach and ingredients are relatively simple – but it's also very hard to get right. Too many run-of-the-mill portions of curried mutton can leave you cold.

Marcia's on the Wicker doesn't have that problem. Whether veggie or carnivore, this place does a generous portion at a reasonable price. Try the jerk or the veg soup. Like all good Caribbean cuisine, it takes a bit longer than you might hope for them to bring your meal out, but well worth it.

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ReCycle Bikes started in 2001 and is now one of the best places in Sheffield to get hold of a cheap bike that won't collapse the minute you sit down. Seriously, forget Halford's and Decathlon – this place refurbishes second-hand rides, as well as stocking new Merida models, accessories and spare parts at competitive prices.

If you want to get your hands dirty, ReCycle also runs cycle maintenance courses and workshops in the evenings, on top of its work providing vocational training to school kids between 14 and 16.

Equally, if you've got an old banger sitting about that is just collecting rust, run it down to Heeley and donate it to this lot. They'll undoubtedly savage something useful from it.

THE OFFICE (US).

Any self-respecting Brit responds to the concept of an American version of the Office with an angry glare of indignation and a snort of utter contempt. Those dumb Americans wouldn't get our highly evolved sense of humour and we wouldn't want them to etc etc.

Well it turns out they do. Kind of. The US version of the Office is Americanised (unavoidable) but actually worth watching once you learn to appreciate it as a separate entity. Steve Carell pulls off the boss role surprising well and while the result contains significantly less despair than its UK counterpart, this is a funny and watchable comedy in its own right.

Avoid season one though – way too many cringeworthy remakes of Office UK storylines.

PECHA KUCHA.

TWITTER: @PKNSHEFF.

We loved the Pecha Kucha #04 Christmas Special at the Dirty Little Secret venue on Smithfield. There was mulled wine, hootenanny, an en masse Secret Santa, a Christmas card competition and general merriment.

The presentations ranged from loving Christmas, Fedex vs Santa to voting on sprouts, crackers (literally), amazing facts about snowflakes and the final presentation ended with the whole room participating in a 20-second panto.

Plans for next year involve many more speakers including Pete McKee, and a certain someone from Now Then who was very happy with her secret Santa – an original Nick Deakin.

If you haven't been before, get yourselves down to this very different, creative and dynamic event, a refreshing break from all the 'networking events' with the usual hoi polloi. Business cards are banned and it has a very relaxed, informal atmosphere, with not a suited person in sight.

THREADS.

SATURDAYS @ DQ.
10 TILL LATE.

The Threads lads and now lasses are relentless. Every Saturday for almost as far back as we can remember, the DQ party on a Saturday night has been a Threads one. Famed for the 'spinning' (or, these days, 'clicking') of genreless classics over and over again, the Threads DJs create a great atmosphere and a lot of sweaty bodies. Well worth the door tax.

Threads also go out of their way to decorate the venue in striking red curtains, transforming the space each Saturday. Fresh from hosting a man of many a legend, Howard Marks A.K.A. Mr Nice, the Threads crew have big things lined up for the New Year and if it's anything like last year's rich pickings, we'll all be eager to get ourselves down there.



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